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Eberhard Kleina

Islam – as liberals understand it Theologians understand

...and what the Bible says about it

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Contents

1. The discarded bishops' crosses..... 7

2. Disastrous Developments and Decisions 10

3. Standpoints of liberal theologians..... 21
3.1. The same God in the Bible and the Quran? 22
3.2. Abraham as the common patriarch of the faith? 28

4. If a Muslim church official approaches their Christian church
Faith reminds and warns 31

5. Is there a way back?..... 34

References and notes 39

Islam – as understood by liberal theologians

...and what does the Bible say?

1. The discarded bishops' crosses

This image circulated widely in the media in the fall of 2016, causing widespread incomprehension, and often sparking outrage and harsh criticism. Even today, many have not forgotten it due to its symbolic significance: a group photograph shows Bishop Heinrich Bedford-Strohm, head of the Evangelical Church in Germany (EKD); Cardinal Reinhard Marx, at the time chairman of the German Bishops' Conference; and, between them in the center of the image, the Islamic Sheikh Omar Awadallah Kiswani. Other high-ranking church officials stand in the background and at the edges of the photograph. Behind the group, the gilded dome of the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem is visible.

The photo was taken on October 20, 2016. Bedford-Strohm and Marx, as top representatives of the two (still) major Christian churches in Germany, led a delegation on a so-called ecumenical pilgrimage to the Temple Mount in Jerusalem, home to the Jewish Western Wall and the Islamic holy sites of the Al-Aqsa Mosque and the Dome of the Rock. After Mecca and Medina, the Al-Aqsa Mosque and the Dome of the Rock are considered the third holiest site in Islam, as it is believed that Muhammad ascended to heaven from the Dome of the Rock. The scandal—and this is why the photo caused such a stir—was that the two highest-ranking German church officials were not wearing their episcopal crosses, as is customary on official occasions. They reportedly removed them out of respect for their Islamic hosts, who had requested it. As is well known, Islam emphatically rejects the cross as a Christian symbol of faith, deeming it an abhorrent sign; therefore, it should not be worn in this Islamic place. The picture shows other church leaders, including, slightly to the right, Annette Kurschus, the President (Bishop) of the Evangelical Church of Westphalia. As a woman, she is wearing the Islamic headscarf. She, too, is not wearing an official cross.

The removal of the bishops' crosses was a spectacular symbolic act, a striking sign of the bishops' submission to the Islamic understanding of the cross. A clearer signal could not be given, and all this under the eyes of the world. These were not just ordinary tourists removing their crosses worn on necklaces.

It wasn't just ordinary people, but the highest representatives of their churches in Germany. What the church delegation likely understood as tolerance, the Islamic side certainly saw as the "unbelievers'" respect for the supremacy of Allah and his rejection of the cross. They must have felt contempt for the church leaders who so readily removed their central symbol of faith at a site holy to Muslims. One might ask, why didn't they simply cancel the visit immediately when the request arose to remove the crosses? This devastating gesture of capitulation to Islam would have been unnecessary.

The public reaction was accordingly negative. *Bild am Sonntag* brought this reader's letter: *"For me, it sends the wrong message. Jesus took up the cross in Jerusalem. His followers laid it down there."* This was written by reader Miriam Hollstein. Journalist Jan Fleischhauer emphasized..." *Spiegel Online*: *"Even among Protestants, who are used to a lot from their church leaders, there is unease about such haste. ... The incident left me speechless. What else can one call it but a denial of the faith when two important representatives of Christianity remove their crosses during a pilgrimage out of consideration for the irritability of Muslim religious leaders? Many people in the history of Christianity have died because they rejected precisely that."*[1]

The matter was made even more embarrassing by the church delegation's claim that the Jewish side had also requested the removal of the bishops' crosses from the Western Wall, a claim immediately and emphatically denied by Israeli government spokesman Arye Sharuz Shalicar, a denial that is also credible. Shalicar criticized the church officials for *""caved in to the radical Arab-Muslim hosts on the Dome of the Rock"* be.[2]

As the debate surrounding their removal from the cross intensified, Bishops Bedford-Strohm and Marx felt compelled to issue a statement. In December 2016, n-tv broadcast a declaration from the two bishops. In retrospect, they acknowledged it would have been better not to have visited the Temple Mount in Jerusalem at that time and in that manner, but they had not wanted to further exacerbate the already tense situation. They also expressed regret that the impression had been created that they had intended to conceal their faith.[3]

Before the eternal God, all people are sinners, not even high-ranking individuals. These individuals, as mentioned, are subject to this scrutiny because of their...

The office is under particular public scrutiny. And unfortunately, a year and a half after the "kneeling" on the Temple Mount, the public had to register that German bishops had once again removed their pectoral crosses during a meeting with Muslims, this time in a mosque in Germany.

In March 2018, the Bishops' Conference of the United Evangelical Lutheran Church of Germany (VELKD) met in Nuremberg. During the conference, they visited the Islamic Community of Nuremberg (IGN) at its premises. A group photo shows the participants: members of the Islamic community, the imam – identifiable by his clothing – and the Lutheran bishops. Only a few of them had the courage to wear their pectoral crosses in the mosque; many, unfortunately, did not. Among those who had removed their crosses were the then Presiding Bishop of the VELKD, Gerhard Ulrich (Schwerin), and, as can be clearly seen in the picture, the head of the Evangelical Church in Germany (EKD), Bedford-Strohm.[4]

The readers[5]Let them form their own opinion about Mr. Bedford-Strohm's statement from December 2016 that he did not intend to conceal his faith by removing his bishop's cross on the Temple Mount. It is a scandal in any case that the Lutheran bishops visited this mosque in Nuremberg. The mosque community is under surveillance by the Office for the Protection of the Constitution (Germany's domestic intelligence agency) because there is sufficient evidence of connections to the radical Islamic Muslim Brotherhood; it has appeared in the agency's annual report since 2005. Nevertheless, the then-chairman of the United Evangelical Lutheran Church of Germany (VELKD), Gerhard Ulrich, defended this visit. *"The fact that the Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution is monitoring the situation is not, in itself, a reason to refuse talks. ... It is the shared responsibility of religions to contribute to peaceful coexistence in an open society. This goal cannot be achieved without dialogue with various parties.*[6]
One wonders to what extent Mr. Ulrich has studied the contents of the Quran, the Hadiths, the life of Muhammad, and the Islamic understanding of the Christian faith. Surely he must have been aware of the severe persecution of Christians worldwide, particularly in predominantly Muslim countries. Removing the cross, a central Christian symbol, at Islamic sites and in the presence of Islamic clergy—especially bishops—is both a way of concealing faith in the crucified Jesus Christ and a significant symbolic act of the Islamization of the once Christian West. Along with many politicians, high-ranking church representatives are thus, in their own way, opening the door to Islam. Muslims have understood this gesture and are increasingly demanding entry through this open door.

Since at least the late 1980s, the immigration of Muslims has led to an Islamization of Germany and Western Europe, which has steadily increased. In recent years, it has truly accelerated, particularly due to the mass Islamic immigration since Chancellor Merkel's disastrous and illegal opening of the borders in September 2015. Germany and Western Europe are on a direct path to a "hostile takeover" (Thilo Sarrazin), that is, to becoming Islamically dominated countries under Sharia law.

The removal of bishops' crosses is by no means the only gesture of the churches' submission to Islam. The Church's demand for regular Islamic religious instruction in public schools, as well as the demand for a public call to prayer by the muezzin, are further examples among numerous others. It should also be remembered what a large platform Islam has been given at Protestant church conventions for decades. It is undeniable that the churches bear a significant share of the responsibility for the Islamization of Germany. What is remarkable is that the churches are reaching out to Islam, or rather, preemptively ingratiating themselves with Islam, while the Islamic side is not budging an inch towards the churches and Christians. The question inevitably arises: How could things have come to this in the churches—both Protestant and Catholic—especially since Islam, in terms of its tenets of faith, represents a major anti-Christian and anti-Jewish force?

2. Disastrous developments and decisions

Theodor Heuss, the first president of the then young Federal Republic of Germany, said on the occasion of a school inauguration ceremony on September 16, 1950 in Heilbronn: *"There are three hills from which the West originated: Golgotha, the Acropolis in Athens, the Capitol in Rome. The West has been spiritually shaped from all of them, and one may, indeed must, see all three as a unity.*[7] In other words, our culture is based, firstly, on the Judeo-Christian roots of the Bible; secondly, on the tradition of free inquiry and thought in ancient Greek philosophy and natural science; and thirdly, on ancient Roman legal, political, and administrative thought. Of course, we have also incorporated the Germanic heritage, humanism, the Enlightenment, and other elements into our culture, but it is true that the essential intellectual foundation of the once Christian West lies in these three "pillars."

The uniqueness of this outstanding Western culture, whose historical missteps are undeniable but which has always been able to correct its errors and achieve great things, is unfortunately no longer perceived by us today. On the contrary, especially in left-wing political circles, our culture, and Germany in particular, is considered contemptible and bad. *"Germany, you miserable piece of shit! Germany, drop dead!* and similar anti-German insults are popular slogans in radical left-wing circles.[8] Other politically left-leaning contemporaries express themselves more eloquently, but an unmistakable distance from our culture and traditions exists here as well. In particular, the "Hill of Golgotha" has been thoroughly dismantled since the cultural revolution of 1968. Unfortunately, the churches bear considerable responsibility for this. Instead, to illustrate Islamization metaphorically, attention is turned to two hills in Mecca that every Muslim visits on their pilgrimage: the hills of Marwa and Safa. The late journalist Peter Scholl-Latour wrote decades ago that he feared not the strength of Islam, but the weakness of the West. Christianity, he argued, had already partially abdicated; it no longer possessed a binding moral code or dogmas.[9]

The removal of pectoral crosses and, more generally, the promotion of Islam by the churches is the result of a very long development that stretches far back into the 19th century and is connected to so-called historical-critical theology. This is a method of biblical interpretation, of exegesis and research within the Bible, found in both Protestant and Catholic theology and churches, indeed worldwide. It has largely prevailed and is now part of the standard doctrine at all state universities in Germany and many other institutions of higher education. For a long time, it has therefore dominated the thinking of entire generations of theologians. Since no one in Germany can become a pastor today without having studied at least a few semesters at a university, everyone inevitably comes into contact with biblical-critical thought; this also applies to bishops and other church officials. It is therefore essential that we examine historical-critical theology. This will only be done in an overview, so as not to overstretch the scope of this essay. Its essential components are:

Textual criticism: Of all the biblical books, the original is known to have been lost; only a multitude of copies exist, which in turn were copied again over generations. The oldest surviving parts of the Old Testament (OT) date back to the 6th-8th centuries AD, the complete Hebrew OT was written around 1000 AD, and the complete OT in Greek translation (Septuagint) dates to the 1st century AD.

3rd-2nd century BC. The oldest fragment of the New Testament (NT) dates from around 125 AD, the complete NT (Codex Sinaiticus) from the 4th century AD. The meticulousness with which the written tradition was carried out, out of deep reverence for the Word of God, became apparent to a stunned scholarly community when, beginning in 1947, the famous discoveries of previously unknown biblical texts were made in Qumran on the Dead Sea, including the complete Book of Isaiah. While a number of variations (variants) can be found in the different biblical manuscripts, the vast majority are insignificant, such as accidental double spellings, transpositions of words, omissions of letters, or the accidental inclusion of marginal notes. Only very few differences in content occur. Textual criticism aims to determine which text was likely the original, or which comes as close as possible to it.

Critique of tradition: What was the likely content of the oral tradition of a biblical text before it was written down? Where did it have its "seat in life," that is, where and in which social circles was it told?

Form criticism What typical language patterns does the text have? Who is speaking? Who are the listeners?

Editorial review If the text was initially passed on orally, then it must have been written down by someone at some point; this person is called the editor. How did they arrange the texts, perhaps combining different ones? What was their intention, what message did they want to convey with the text?

Critique of Tradition It is partly identical to textual and redaction criticism. However, it also concerns which intellectual and religious ideas of the time the text incorporates. For example: Does the biblical creation story, at least in part, derive from the Epic of Gilgamesh of the ancient Babylonians in Mesopotamia (present-day Iraq)? It originated around 4,000 years ago as a world creation myth and is part of the polytheistic religion of that era. Was the biblical creation account shaped from this?

This may suffice as a rough overview of the historical-critical method. If one approaches biblical texts in this way, dissecting them as if on a dissecting table, so to speak, and purely rationally

If you examine the Bible too closely, you won't discover its true meaning as the word of the living God, which speaks to each and every person personally. It's like analyzing the music of Johann Sebastian Bach by asking, for example, in the case of the St. Matthew and St. John Passions: Did Bach write the texts himself or have them written for him? Or by compiling a list of which and how many instruments are involved, who made them, their volume, and how they are combined in the performance. How many choir members are there? How many men, how many women? And so on. You will never grasp the profound content and meaning of this music that way. Or take an example from painting: the Isenheim Altarpiece by Matthias Grünewald. What colors did the painter use, how did he mix them? What is the chemical composition of the paints? Did he make them himself or did someone else? Did the painter paint on wood or canvas? And so on. Here, too, you will never grasp the profound meaning that the painter wanted to express with his painting. Thus, the historical-critical method of biblical interpretation is close to the Bible, but only outwardly; inwardly, it is miles away from the revealed word of God.

First, let's consider the effects of this theology. Many young, devout believers entered theological studies only to lose their faith in the living, triune God of the Bible by the end of their studies, having passed their exams under the influence of the historical-critical method. Instead, they were confronted with left-wing, socially critical, and even socialist positions, which have long shaped thinking at universities and colleges. The author of these lines still vividly remembers the upheavals and unrest of 1968, when fellow students—that is, theology students—practiced slogans at night in the student dormitories, such as...*"We are a small radical minority!* and other things that were then loudly chanted at demonstrations in the streets the following day. Another fellow student even later appeared in media reports as a pastor in his cassock at anti-nuclear power rallies. During church services, he had a large, round, yellow sticker on the back of his cassock:*"Nuclear power - no thanks!* Whenever he turned towards the altar, his congregation could see his opinion on nuclear power.

Of course, there have always been and still are theology professors and students who are biblically faithful. However, they play only a minor role in everyday university life. They are categorized as evangelicals. With this stance, one almost automatically becomes an outsider. This can have repercussions even in one's professional life. One example is the former Saxon State Bishop Carsten Rentzing, who was dismissed in October 2019 due to public...

He resigned his office due to pressure from both within and outside the church. He was accused of having espoused right-wing and nationalist ideas as a student, a frequently used "killer tactic" to get rid of undesirable individuals. In reality, it was his non-conformity to the spirit of the age and his adherence to Holy Scripture as the revealed word of the living God that led to his resignation.

What is historical-critical theology all about? Essentially, this method of biblical interpretation strips the Christian faith of its core tenets. This school of thought began in 1835 when the Protestant theologian and philosopher David Friedrich Strauss (1808-1874), influenced by the Enlightenment, advocated the demythologization of the Bible in his book "The Life of Jesus." He wanted to "purify" the Bible of everything he considered outdated myths—stories about gods—that could not withstand human reason. As a consequence, he renounced the Christian faith and—very unusual at the time—was buried without a pastor.

Following Strauss's lead, the aim was, and still is, to extract the supposedly mythological statements of the Bible—relegated to the realm of legend and the unreal—and reinterpret them for modern times. Human reason is applied to the Bible as the standard by which it is judged. What withstands this scrutiny is accepted; everything else is rejected. According to this standard, the so-called mythologies of the Bible are bound to their time; they reflect the understanding of the people in whose era the Bible originated, understanding that modern people no longer comprehend. The intention is to critically examine the historical background of the Bible and the religious beliefs of the time in which it was written, hence the term "historical-critical." However, it is not simply about clarifying the historical facts, which would certainly be acceptable in the sense of "historical-biblical" scholarship, where the Bible is respected as the word of God. Rather, the historical-critical method skeptically questions the very notion of the Bible as the word of God.

The idea that there is a heaven and a hell is mythological, as is the devil who tempts people, and the miracles of the Bible are mythological; they are not considered accounts of actual miracles. Much about Jesus is also mythological, such as his conception by the Holy Spirit and his birth by the Virgin Mary. All of this is subjected to the test of human reason. One of the leading historical-critical theologians of the 20th century was Professor Rudolf Bultmann (1884-1976) in Marburg. He rejected the notion that Jesus *"was understood as the Son of God, as a*

great pre-existing celestial being(Note: pre-existent = existing before birth),*who became human for our salvation, who took on suffering, even unto the cross. Such ideas are obviously mythological; they were widespread in the mythologies of Jews and pagans and were then transferred to the historical person of Jesus."*[10]Some believe that most of what we read about Jesus in the Bible is historically highly questionable. They claim that reliable historical information is so scarce that it could fit on a postcard.

To emphasize this point once more: Critical human reason, which has been elevated to the standard, stands above the Word of God in the Bible; there is no reverence for the Word of the living God and His revelation. Thus, the Bible loses its binding force for faith. Humans determine what in it is to be considered credible and what is not. That much is thereby omitted from the Bible is an inevitable consequence; for some historical-critical theologians, God does not exist at all, since He is inconceivable from a rational perspective. Some still concede that God can bear witness to Himself in His Word, naturally in a historically and critically purified Word.

Eta Linnemann (1926-2009), Professor of New Testament Studies at the University of Marburg, who died in May 2009, was a highly respected representative of this theological school of thought at the beginning of her academic career. Besides Rudolf Bultmann, her teachers included other highly esteemed figures such as Ernst Fuchs, Friedrich Gogarten, and Gerhard Ebeling. She was firmly convinced that her work in biblical criticism was the right approach.*"to do God a service."*[11]In 1977, a personal and profound experience of the living God led her to break with her previous position. Through her conversion, she became a child of God with a personal relationship to the triune God. She made this public and retracted her previous interpretation of the Bible. She requested that individuals discard the books she had written up to that point, as she now considered her former biblical criticism to be nothing more than "*Dirt*" looked at, as she herself put it.[12]In the horrified historical-critical "community," her reputation plummeted from its lofty heights to rock bottom. For many former colleagues, she had become a non-person, someone they avoided. But even in theological darkness, God can raise up witnesses. In her work "Original or Forgery: Historical-Critical Theology in the Light of the Bible," Linnemann explains in detail why she broke with this theology. As a competent expert, she points out all the faith-destroying statements of this theological school of thought. Some of the key points are listed below.

She writes: Historical-critical theology starts from the assumption that God does not exist, *"The reality of God is theoretically excluded from the outset.*[13] Since there is no rational proof that God exists, one doesn't even consider the existence of a living God. Furthermore: *"The unexplained but practiced principle of Old Testament and New Testament scholarship is: As it is written.* (Note: in the Bible) *, it could not possibly have been that."*[14]
Much has been corrupted through oral and later written transmission. For historical-critical theologians, the biblical texts are teeming with later additions. Accordingly, they argue that the Bible is not divinely inspired, as stated in 2 Timothy 3:16-17. If one does not believe in the inspiration of the Bible as a whole, then one cannot assume that its individual books complement and interpret one another. From a historical-critical perspective, the approximately 40 authors of the biblical books wrote as ordinary people, without guidance from the Holy Spirit. The Bible is no longer considered an unbiased source of truth, nor a document of God's self-revelation. *"The Bible is not treated in a way that respects it as the word of God.*[15]

Jesus is taught that he by no means saw himself as the Messiah, *" Messiah is merely a title of dignity, as is Son of God, and Savior, which various groups of early Christianity attached to Jesus.*[16] That was merely the belief of the early Christian communities; the texts were later "improved." Some don't hesitate to say so. *"Jesus was praised by his followers through such titles."*[17] It is impossible, for example, that he predicted the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem (Mark 13:2); this was only attributed to him later, after the catastrophe had occurred. This is the only explanation considered reasonable. From a historical-critical perspective, Jesus was merely a social reformer or revolutionary. As a kind of early socialist, he wanted to change unjust social structures, for instance, by improving the status of women and advocating for the socially marginalized, such as tax collectors and prostitutes. He did indeed do this, but precisely as the Messiah of God.

Linnemann laments that the Old Testament is being sidelined and the Ten Commandments are viewed as documents of the patriarchal family structures and agrarian production conditions of the time; Jesus supposedly replaced them with the commandment of love. Moses, he claims, did not write the Five Books of Moses, but rather that they originated from various authors who drew on their own sources. Of the 13 Pauline epistles in the New Testament, it is asserted that Paul did not write 7, making them inauthentic, and that we are therefore deceived if we believe they originated as such.

God's word from him. According to historical-critical theology, the Epistles to the Ephesians and Colossians, the First and Second Epistles to the Thessalonians, the First and Second Epistles to Timothy, and the Epistles to Titus are considered inauthentic; however, there is some disagreement regarding certain others. John, the disciple of Jesus, is not the author of the Gospel of John—and so on. In short: According to this theology, the Bible is no longer the book of books, which has so decisively shaped our culture and to which Theodor Heuss alluded with "Hill of Golgotha."

Yes, it is claimed that truths are also contained in the holy scriptures of other religions. *"Historical-critical theology states: We cannot consider the Bible as Holy Scripture, but at most as a book that claims to be Holy Scripture. There are other books that make the same claim, such as the Quran and the Vedas.*[18] *and others. Let us therefore disregard this claim and approach the Bible like any other book."*[19] Therefore, one cannot assume that the Bible alone is the sole holy scripture. Because other "holy" scriptures also contain truths, they are on a par with the Bible. Or, put another way: Christian faith and other religions are equally valid. It is interesting that the same theologians who are so critical of their biblical foundation of faith do not examine the Quran with the same critical eye, even though it is precisely this "holy" book whose text is highly controversial.

To put it mildly, Islam has a dubious and opaque history, which is also demonstrable, quite apart from the anti-Semitic and anti-Christian statements and the numerous calls for violence against "infidels," the discrimination against women, and other issues. Very few critics of Islam speak plainly on this matter. But they have become reticent with their insights, avoid the public eye, and prefer to discuss things only amongst themselves.

This, in a few strokes, outlines the theological spirit of the age, which has also shaped today's generation of theologians, some more than others; some have adopted only parts of it, and only a few directly oppose it. This theological spirit of the age is anti-Christian, but presents itself in Christian and liberal garb. Anyone who has gone through this theological school during their training to become a pastor—a school that for many is a kind of theological brainwashing—almost inevitably has a fractured relationship with the Bible and with faith, unless the grace of God has preserved them from it or led them out of it, as Linnemann experienced. How many church officials today could honestly recite the Apostles' Creed with its supposedly mythological statements?

Emerging from this theological spirit of the age, the Catholic Church was the first to formulate a fundamental reorientation in its relationship with Islam as early as the 1960s. With the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965), the aim was to end the hostile and often violent conflicts of past centuries. To this end, the Church began with a theological re-evaluation of the question of God. Here, a fateful decision was made, first in the spirit of historical-critical theology; it was the Church's millennia-long error.

The conciliar documents "Nostra aetate" and "Lumen gentium" established that the triune God of the Bible is identical with the Allah of the Quran: *"The Church also regards with high esteem the Muslims who worship the one God, the living and self-existent, merciful and almighty, the Creator of heaven and earth."*[20] And in "Lumen gentium" it says: *"The will to salvation also includes those who acknowledge the Creator, among them especially the Muslims who profess the faith of Abraham and worship with us the one God, the merciful one, who will judge people on the Last Day."*[21] These statements are unequivocal; they cannot be relativized through interpretation. They state that Christians and Muslims worship the same God. This is the position held by the Catholic Church to this day. According to Catholic doctrine, a council cannot err, but this statement is in no way supported by the Bible, the word of the living God.

With some delay, the Protestant churches also responded to the thesis of the *"*a god" jumped up. In 1990, the "Lutheran Church Office of the United Evangelical Lutheran Church of Germany" (VELKD) and the "Church Office of the Evangelical Church in Germany" (EKD) published the paper "What everyone needs to know about Islam" as a paperback. *".*It can be seen as the official Protestant position on Islam. To this day, it is considered a standard work, a compendium of basic knowledge about Islam, a seminal book for theologians, church officials, and all Protestant Christians in general. It was revised, reprinted, and expanded several times until 2011. The historical-critical spirit of the age is also a factor here. Readers are informed about the religious foundations of Islam, its law, rules of conduct, gender roles, dying, death, its relationship to Christianity, points of contact, controversial topics, and so on. The Allah of the Quran is consistently referred to as "God," not "Allah," presumably to avoid any linguistic distinction between the two. Undoubtedly, a wealth of detailed information was compiled, much that is factual and accurate about Islam; however, the authors were rather reserved in their criticism, as the question of God was not yet open to debate in 1990.

so clearly defined, the idea of the "common God."

The first editions of the book emphasized that, according to both Christian and Islamic beliefs, Jesus Christ represents an obstacle between the two religions. The 4th edition from 1995 states the following: *"According to Christian understanding, Jesus is misunderstood in Islam because he is seen 'only' as a prophet. Christians profess Jesus Christ as the 'Son of God'. ... This reveals the real and decisive difference between Christianity and Islam, which a Christian appreciation, with all due respect for the Islamic faith, must clearly outline: That God humbles himself and enters our human world, indeed, that he exposes himself to suffering and death because his love compels him to do so and he wants to bring his lost creatures home to himself – this experience is alien to Islam, indeed, it is considered blasphemous.*[22]

Up to this point, every Bible-believing Christian would likely agree. However, the following lines become problematic because, as in the Catholic Church, the same God is being referred to in both the Bible and the Quran. This is cleverly and cautiously framed as a question: *"Is Islam a path to salvation, different from the Christian faith, but equally legitimate because it is directed toward the same goal—the one God? For Muslims, the answer to this question lies in their obedience to God's law. ... In obedience to God's law, they experience salvation and find security in view of God's judgment and eternity.* Different rules apply to Christians; for them this is *"Salvation is bound to the experience of God's love, which took form in Jesus Christ. Outside of this love, they cannot recognize salvation. However, faith has also always acknowledged that humans cannot define the limits of God's love.*[23]

One gets the impression that the authors are beating around the bush. They don't say it directly, but it's suggested that it is indeed one and the same God. The cat is finally let out of the bag theologically by appealing to the love of God: for if humans cannot define the limits of God's love, then a path to eternity must also be possible for Muslims, who do not believe in Jesus as Savior and Son of God. This isn't stated explicitly, but it's an obvious conclusion for the reader. In short: the love of God apparently makes it possible for Muslims, with their belief in Allah, to also go to heaven. The liberal theologian simply rejects the primacy of the Gospel.

By invoking God's love, a loophole had been left open, as was also the case decades later with the issue of "marriage for all".

Once again, the church made it theologically possible for homosexuals to have their weddings in the church through the love of God, contrary to clear biblical statements. With regard to Islam, it seems they didn't want to state so clearly that every person who does not have Jesus in their personal faith is eternally lost. This biblical statement was elegantly softened.

How uncertain people still were about the supposedly shared God is shown by a Protestant handbook entitled "Clarity and Good Neighborliness - Christians and Muslims in Germany," published by the EKD (Evangelical Church in Germany) in 2006. It states: *"However, Christians will hardly be able to attach their hearts to a God as described in the Quran and as worshipped by Muslims."*[24] This doesn't sound like it refers to one and the same God, but it was probably just a last stand. This was subsequently eliminated.

The last completely revised edition of "What Everyone Needs to Know About Islam" was published in 2011. It states: *"The question is repeatedly asked whether Christians and Muslims believe in the same God.* Initially, the situation remains vague: *"As Christians, we cannot answer with a clear yes or no.* Then we get down to business: *"From a historical-religious perspective, Christians naturally refer to the God who revealed himself to the people of Israel and of whom the Old Testament speaks. And Muhammad* (Note: Mohammed) *and the Quran refer to the same tradition.* ***All three so-called monotheistic religions are about the same God."*** (Note: Bold text by the author)[25]

The United Evangelical Lutheran Church of Germany (VELKD) and the Church Office of the Evangelical Church in Germany (EKD), which publish this book, have made a clear official church statement: It is the same God in the Bible and in the Quran. This is what one hears throughout the country from Protestant bishops, pastors, and other church officials. Only evangelical fringe groups seem to disagree, but they are suspected of so-called Islamophobia, hatred of Islam, perhaps even xenophobia, or even right-wing populism.

Interfaith services, or multifaith peace prayers as they are called, became possible with the participation of a pastor and an imam. This happened in my hometown of Bünde in East Westphalia as early as October 16, 2007, where Catholic and Protestant parishioners gathered together with Muslims. In such joint "services," biblical and Quranic texts are read aloud, the latter in Arabic, a language no local understands and therefore cannot be understood.

It is possible to troll what is being read aloud. These events predominantly take place in churches; however, if one gathers in a mosque, from an Islamic perspective, the "unbelieving" Christians have already submitted to Allah and his claim to dominion simply by removing their shoes.

Including Judaism, this is referred to as the "Abrahamic ecumenism," with Abraham considered the patriarch of all three religions. When bishops remove their pectoral crosses during visits to mosques or "holy" Islamic sites, they likely did not perceive this as a denial of their faith, since it is, after all, the same God. He is simply worshipped differently in Islam, and because Islam dislikes the cross of Christ, it is concealed out of a tolerant and liberal stance. Interestingly, however, so-called laypeople have a much more nuanced understanding of this. In the previously cited letters to the editor, there is talk of a "denial of the Christian faith." And that is indeed the case.

The majority of the Protestant Church—like the Catholic Church—has committed itself to this age-old error of the supposedly one God. This is dictated by the historically critical, liberal spirit of the age. They claim they don't want to exclude or discriminate against anyone. However, it is a spirit that leads away from the Bible and toward the Quran; it is not the Holy Spirit of the triune God. In any case, this stance cannot be justified from a biblical perspective.**Theologically, the Catholic and Protestant churches have thus rolled out the red carpet for Islam and paved the way for the Islamization of the West.**

3. Standpoints of liberal theologians

The following remarks are not an exhaustive list of the positions of liberal theologians. They are intended only to present prominent and frequently expressed opinions on Islam, using the representative examples of a Protestant and a Catholic theologian, each of whom represents the majority within their respective churches. Their viewpoints largely coincide. Generally speaking, liberal theologians strive to find common ground in order to minimize the differences that undoubtedly exist between Christianity and Islam. They aim to build bridges in the spirit of liberalism and tolerance, even where complete contradictions exist, with the Christian side making efforts to reach out to their Islamic counterparts. Some hope for a so-called "Euro-Islam" committed to fundamental democratic values.

If we extend this approach chronologically, it would likely lead first to "Chrislam," a hybrid form between Christianity and Islam, and then to the complete takeover of power by Islam in order to...*""To make the religion of truth triumph over every other faith."*((Surah 48:28; further commands of Allah for world conquest in Surah 2:193; 8:39; 61:9) This is a commandment of Allah to his followers, which one attempts to achieve through jihad. Jihad is by no means primarily a military attack (as it is commonly understood), but rather the effort to advance Allah's cause, to spread Islam, and to gradually secure more weight and influence for it. This includes, for example, the construction of mosques, the public call to prayer by the muezzin, an increasing number of Muslims in state and administrative offices, but also the gradual takeover of entire streets with the establishment of Sharia law, birth jihad, immigration jihad, the toleration of polygamous marriage, etc.

For the future of the once Christian West, it is essential to establish theological clarity between the Christian faith and Islam. This involves questioning the intellectual constructs of liberal theologians. For Protestant Christians, the only standard in this process of clarification can be the Reformation principle of "Sola Scriptura," the Bible alone, the word of the living God. This is not about discrediting Muslims as human beings, for they—like all people—are made in God's image. Rather, it is about examining the spirits...*"whether they are from God; for many false prophets have gone out into the world."* (1 John 4:1)

3.1. The same God in the Bible and the Quran?

Let us first consider the concept of a shared God, to which, as already explained in detail, both the Catholic and Protestant churches have committed themselves. A representative of this position was the former Protestant Bishop of Kurhessen-Waldeck, **Dr. Martin Hein**, who accordingly expressed himself publicly in speech and writing. He likely speaks for the majority of today's Protestant theologians on this point.

In a lecture in 2016, Hein stated:*"Judaism, Christianity, and Islam are siblings, intricately interwoven, having evolved from one another in some respects and influencing each other. ... The question of the one God is therefore not a secondary matter. It is a fundamental question. What the three monotheistic religions of Abrahamic origin have in common is the experience of being addressed by God.*

*to be that. ... God is a merciful God. God's name is defiled where it is misused for violence. ...**We pray to the same God!*** (Note: Bold text by the author) *But we do it in different ways, and—as far as Christians and Islam are concerned—in mutually exclusive ways. ... We must try to understand the identity of God* (Note: in Judaism, Christianity and Islam) *to find a common practice of reconciliation and peaceful coexistence."*

Hein further points out that Jesus Christ and the Christian belief in the triune God (Trinity) represent the major problem that Muslims reject as the worship of three gods: *"For us Christians, the truth is revealed in Jesus Christ. ... In him, God took on human form. ... And yet, I see the concept of the Triune God as a bridge. ... This, however, presupposes that our Muslim interlocutors critically examine their understanding of the doctrine of the Trinity and their understanding of Jesus Christ – who, alongside Muhammad, is the highest prophet in the Quran.*[26]

It must be said: The hope that Muslims will critically examine their understanding of the Trinity and their understanding of Jesus Christ is a utopia, pure wishful thinking. Why? For Muslims, the Quran is the eternally valid word of Allah. Not a single letter can or will be changed, because according to Islamic interpretation, the Quran was revealed word for word by Allah. Therefore, Muslims cannot critically examine anything. Even the mere thought, let alone the tentative attempt, of critically examining anything in Allah's word would constitute an immense affront to Allah, a denial of faith that inevitably leads to hell, which Allah threatens in over 400 verses of the Quran. And Muslims know that Allah is very strict. *""If one opposes Allah, indeed, Allah is severe in punishment."* (Sura 59:4) When Muslims truly begin to critically examine their faith, even questioning certain tenets, which does happen, they put themselves in danger and are considered apostates. To this day, many have paid for this with their lives.

Let us first examine what Allah says about the Trinity, about His Triune God as described in the Bible, and about Jesus as the Son of God. All statements in the Quran assume that Christians (and of course Jews) as "People of the Book" supposedly corrupted the Bible (Surah 2:75; 3:78; 4:46; 5:14f), a corruption that is now being rectified by the Quran. However, it is curious: Didn't Islam emerge 600 years after Jesus, at a time when the entire Bible was already complete? How credible is it to attempt to retrospectively correct the Bible through the "revelation" of the Quran more than half a millennium later?

Do the people in the Bible receive false revelations back then?

Regarding the Trinity, Allah has clearly stated that there is no triune God (Surah 4:171; 5:73). Belief in God as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit is "shirk" (associating partners with God), meaning that other gods are associated with the one God—a profoundly damnable polytheistic practice, an unforgivable sin that can never be forgiven. As Christians who believe in the triune God, we have only the prospect of fire as our abode in the hereafter (Surah 5:72). In Islam, Jesus is also not the Son of God (Surah 19:35; 19:88-92). Jesus, like Adam, is merely a creature of the earth (Surah 3:59). Furthermore, Allah denies that Jesus was crucified and killed. Judas, the betrayer, was crucified in Jesus' place (Surah 4:157). But Jesus was raised alive by Allah (Surah 3:55; 4:158). Islam also affirms that Jesus will return. Jesus will then break all crosses, kill all pigs, and invite all people to Islam.[27]But this is by no means the Jesus Christ of the New Testament. This so-called Jesus does not bear the sins of the world.

For Muslims, Jesus is considered only a prophet, meaning he is merely a human being; however, he is subordinate to Muhammad, the Seal of the Prophets (Quran 33:40), the final prophet who brings the truth in its fullest sense. Allah never allows any of His prophets to be executed. A vicarious atonement sacrifice by Jesus would be futile anyway, since no one is capable of taking the place of another in Allah's judgment; this must be done by each individual (Quran 17:15; 35:18; 39:7; 53:38). Many Muslims therefore believe that they can achieve their own impeccable standing before Allah because their good deeds will drive out their bad deeds (Quran 11:114; 29:7; 35:29-30). However, the agonizing and terrible uncertainty remains regarding what happens after death. For Allah is sovereign and forgives whom He wills and leads astray whom He wills (Quran 6:39; 13:27; 14:4; 16:93; 74:31), pardons and punishes whom He wills (Quran 2:284; 3:129), and in punishment, as already emphasized, He is very severe (Quran 59:4). Islamic scholars further claim that the life of every human being is predetermined in detail even in the womb, so what need is there for a crucified person and their atoning death? After all, one can do nothing if Allah has ordained Hell for a person.

In plain terms, this means:**The Allah of the Quran denies and combats the indispensable core tenets of the Christian faith.**, but these are non-negotiable for Christians. If we abandon them or dilute them, we also abandon our Christian faith. How one can equate the God of the Bible with Allah in light of these statements in the Quran,

This is incomprehensible. It's certainly not biblical. You can't be lopsided on both sides. That was true in Elijah's time and it's just as true today. *"How long will you waver between two opinions? If the Lord is God, follow him; but if Baal is God, follow him."* Elijah asked his countrymen. And today we must say: If the triune God is the true God, then follow Him; but if it is Allah, then follow Him. Whoever is not with Jesus, as the Bible testifies, is against Him (Matthew 12:30). One cannot be with Jesus and Muhammad at the same time—there is no bridge between the two. Those theologians who consider God in the Bible and Allah in the Quran to be identical, and who, as pastors and other officials, are ordained on the Bible, should one day defend this themselves before the eternal God.

All four Gospels and the New Testament epistles, in complete contrast to the Quran, testify to the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus, as well as the unity of Jesus with the Father. Jesus says: *""I and the Father are one."* (John 10:30) *"Whoever sees me sees the one who sent me.* (John 12:45) This unity is—as already mentioned—an indispensable part of the Christian faith. There is also nothing to negotiate regarding the divine sonship of Jesus, which is emphasized in many places in the New Testament, for example: *"This is my Father's will, that whoever sees the Son and believes in him shall have eternal life.*((John 6:40) The term "Trinity of God" (God as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit) does not appear in the Bible, but its meaning is clearly expressed. Jesus says: *" But if the<u>comforter</u> will come* (Note: the Holy Spirit), *which I will send you from<u>Father</u> , the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, he will bear witness to<u>me</u> "* (John 15:26)

Islam in no way accepts the idea that, according to John 14:6, only Jesus is the way to eternity: *"I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me!* The apostles confirmed this: Jesus Christ, *"Salvation is found in no other name, for there is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved.*(Acts 4:12) In his first letter, the Apostle John writes: *"Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life.*((1 John 5:12) God gave him the name, *"who is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."*((Phil. 2:9-11) The Allah of the Quran categorically rejects this, since Jesus is only a prophet, a human being who is also subordinate to Muhammad. But the Bible says: *"Who is a liar, if not he who denies that Jesus is the Christ? That is the Antichrist, who denies the Father and the Son."*((1 John 2:22) And that is exactly what Allah does.

By the standards of the Bible, the Allah of the Quran—we must state this clearly—is none other than the enemy of God, Satan. I have explained this in detail elsewhere in my publications.[28]

The concept of mercy also fails to bridge the gap between the triune God of the Bible and Allah in the Quran, as former Protestant Bishop Hein had hoped. While Allah is mentioned at the beginning of every surah in the Quran, this does not necessarily mean that the concept of mercy is the same. - except for the 1st and 9th Surahs - presented with: *"In the name of Allah, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful.* Furthermore, it is often emphasized that Allah is merciful.

Mouhanad Khorchide, Professor of Islamic Religious Education at the University of Münster, also wants to understand Islam as a merciful Islam. In a debate with the critic of Islam, Hamed Abdel-Samad, Khorchide emphasized: *"In my book 'Islam is Mercy' I have developed the criterion of mercy as a hermeneutical key.* (Note: Key to interpretation) *and explains access to a humanistic understanding of the Quran."*[29] But let us ask critically: What work of mercy has Allah actually performed for his followers? And here we find nothing. He doesn't even guarantee his believers paradise, but—as already mentioned—remains opaque. He forgives whomever he wills and leads astray whomever he wills. He pardons and punishes whomever he wills. But once Allah is terribly clear: He casts every one of his followers into hell and perhaps takes one or two out again (Surah 19:68-72). That doesn't look like mercy. The triune God of the Bible, the one God, as an undeniable work of mercy, allowed his Son to die for us on the cross and raised him again, and whoever believes in him has eternal life. Jesus gave us this guarantee: *"Whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life."* (John 5:24; 6:47) Such a verse is nowhere to be found in the Quran.

According to Hein, the use of violence in God's name is an abuse of God. This is absolutely correct. Jesus abolished the holy wars of Israel against its enemies, which God had ordained in the Old Testament, when he told Peter: *"Put your sword back in its place! For all who draw the sword will die by the sword!"* (Matthew 26:52) However, anyone who uses violence in the name of Allah against "unbelievers" (against Jews, Christians, atheists and followers of other religions) can readily invoke the Quran, for example: *"And when you meet the unbelievers, strike off their heads until you have slaughtered them."* (Sura 47:4) Similar calls to violence can be found more than twenty times in the Quran. And these were...

Allah has not abolished it. The IS murder gangs and jihadists know this.

In his book "Jesus and Mohammed," publicist and Islamic expert Mark A. Gabriel provides a competent and unambiguous explanation of the issue of violence in Islam. Gabriel was initially a student and later a professor at Al-Azhar University in Cairo, the highest educational authority in Sunni Islam (comparable to the Vatican in Catholicism). He later converted to Christianity, a move that nearly led to his father shooting him, and now lives in the USA. During his student days, his teacher was Sheikh Omar Abdel Rahman, who later became known as the mastermind behind the first bombing of the World Trade Center in New York in 1993. Mark A. Gabriel writes about him: *"He gave us an opportunity to ask questions, and so I stood up in front of five hundred students and asked, 'Why do you talk so much about jihad in your lectures? What about the other verses in the Quran that speak of peace, love, and forgiveness?' His face turned red. I saw that he was getting angry, but I also saw that he was trying to control his anger. Instead of shouting at me, he used the opportunity to reaffirm his position. 'My brother,' he said, 'there is an entire surah (a chapter of the Quran) about the spoils of war. There is no surah about peace. Jihad and killing are the core of Islam. Whoever takes them out is cutting off the core of Islam.'* [30] It couldn't be said more clearly. In addition to Surah 8, "The Spoils of War," one could also add Surah 48, "Victory," Surah 58, "The Warring," and Surah 61, "The Order of Battle." The extent to which violence plays a role in Islam can also be seen here: Allah may cast every one of his followers into Hell, but for those who fall in battle for his cause, he provides *""enormous wage"* ((Sura 4:74), paradise is in sight (Sura 9:88f). No wonder suicide bombers keep emerging.

Many secularized Muslims reject this use of violence and prefer to focus on the peaceful aspects of Islam. However, it must be clearly stated that they are, in essence, not really Muslims at all, or only cultural Muslims, because the militant jihad is inextricably linked to Islam. For "orthodox" Muslims, they are already considered deviants. Whether we like it or not, "Islam" does not mean "peace," but "submission," capitulation to Allah. When will church leaders finally acknowledge this? According to the Quran, they and all Christians are considered "unbelievers," even below cattle. *""Behold, in the sight of Allah are the disbelievers worse than cattle."* (Sure 8.55), *""Fire is their home."* ((Sura 47:12) Allah has permitted violence against such people. How can a peaceful "Euro-Islam" come about under these circumstances? Hein wants to derive a common practice from the identity of God in the Christian faith and in Islam.

The goal is to find reconciliation and peaceful coexistence. However, this identity is not provided by either the Bible or the Quran, unless both sides make significant concessions to their faith. Muslims will not do this, that much is certain. But a large number of Christian theologians are in danger of doing precisely what many do not say so explicitly in public, but which they do in fact act upon.

3.2. Abraham as the common ancestor of the faith?

Another argument frequently cited by liberal theologians is the reference to Abraham, to whom Christians, Jews, and Muslims all appeal. Many humanistically oriented thinkers of our time also readily employ this argument, hoping that by returning to the common patriarch Abraham, a reconciliation of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam can be achieved. We already encountered this idea in Hein's work. Now, however, we will illustrate this idea using the example of the well-known Catholic theologian.**Hans Küng**to give the Catholic perspective a voice as well. However critical Hans Küng may be of his own church, he remains loyal on the issue of "Islam - Christianity".

In an interview on March 17, 2008, Küng said:*"It can be assumed that the Hebrew Bible, the New Testament, and the Quran are interconnected – through the**Faith in the one God of Abraham*.(Note: Bold text by the author)*It is no argument to say that we understand this God differently. ... In any case, belief in one God is a solid foundation ... for all three religions."*(Note: Judaism, Christianity, Islam) [31]

But how sound is the argument that Abraham, as a key figure, can lead to a reconciliation of tensions between religions? Our standard is again the Bible. God said to Abraham (then still Abram):*"In you all the peoples of the earth shall be blessed."*((Genesis 12:3) God made an everlasting covenant with Abraham (Genesis 17:1-14). This covenant also applies to Abraham's son Isaac and his descendants (Genesis 17:19, 21); it does not apply to Abraham's other son, Ishmael, whom God also blessed, but whom he definitely only intended to make into a great nation (Genesis 17:20). Consequently, God later reveals himself to Moses in the burning bush with the words:*"I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob."*(Exodus 3:6)

God's line of blessing thus extends through Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, ultimately leading to Jesus Christ, who came into the world among God's chosen people and accomplished God's merciful work of redemption. The New Testament points to Abraham as the father of faith (Romans 4:1ff) and clearly distinguishes between his descendants: Abraham had two sons., *"one from the maid, the other from the free woman."* (Gal. 4:22), one from Hagar, namely Ishmael, and the other from Sarah, namely Isaac. *"The one conceived by the slave woman was conceived according to the flesh, but the one conceived by the free woman by virtue of the promise."* ((Gal. 4:23) The line of God's blessing therefore runs solely through Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, not through Abraham, Ishmael and Esau.

How can one "correct" something that God has so clearly established? Even theologians trained in historical-critical methods have no right to do so. It is also worth considering that while Islam has included the story of Abraham's sacrifice (Genesis 22:1-19) in the Quran (Surah 37:101-113), it does not mention the name of Abraham's son whom he was to sacrifice. Islamic scholars insist, however, that it was Ishmael. According to the Bible, this is incorrect; it was Isaac. Thus, within Islam, one is essentially defining oneself as not belonging to God's line of blessing through Isaac. Incidentally, the Dome of the Rock is also considered sacred in Islam because at its center is a rock slab upon which Abraham was supposed to sacrifice his son, and from which Muhammad, as mentioned, is said to have ascended to heaven. In remembrance of Abraham, who was willing to sacrifice his son, the Islamic world celebrates the Festival of Sacrifice (Eid al-Adha). It is the most important Islamic festival, a family celebration during which animals are slaughtered by ritual slaughter. In Islamic countries, this is a brutal form of torture for the animals; one should look at the photos, although one needs strong nerves to do so. Nevertheless, church authorities in Germany also send greetings for the Feast of Sacrifice to local Muslims. The question is whether we actually want such customs here.

Regarding Abraham, called Ibrahim in the Islamic world, the Quran also includes numerous stories that, while also found in the Bible, are mostly altered to the point of being barely recognizable, and sometimes even stories entirely outside the Bible. For example, we learn that Abraham founded the Kaaba, the largest Islamic shrine in present-day Saudi Arabia (Surah 3:95-97), and proclaimed the pilgrimage to Mecca (Surah 22:26-29). Abraham was rescued from the fiery furnace (Surah 21:68-70; 37:98-99) and made a Muslim (Surah 2:131) and an Imam for the people by Allah (Surah 2:124). Abraham was neither Jewish nor Christian, but of pure faith, thus a Muslim (Surah 3:67), even the first of the Muslims (Surah 6:163). Aside from that, there are also...

Since there is not the slightest indication that the Abraham of the Bible ever set foot in Mecca on the Arabian Peninsula, the differences between the Ibrahim of Islam and the Abraham of the Bible are so great that one must honestly say that the two cannot be identical, and therefore Islam cannot claim to be based on the Abraham of the Bible. It would be good if liberal theologians with a historical-critical approach would address these differences. Would one then still speak of Abraham as the common patriarch of faith?

Historically speaking, it is likely that Mohammed[32]He initially wanted to win over the Jews in Medina to his new religion. However, they saw through him and mocked him, as his biographer Ibn Hisham recorded.[33]As a result, numerous anti-Semitic verses can be found in the Quran and the Hadiths. Muhammad's attempt to win over the Christians also failed when he held an interfaith dialogue with a Christian delegation from Najran in northern Yemen; they too rejected him. Muhammad then accused the Christians of lying because they believed in Jesus as the Son of God.[34]

Back to Küng. Notwithstanding this finding in the Bible and the Quran, he believes Muhammad can even be a prophet for Christians. The Catholic journalist Magdalena Ebertz writes:*"He is guided by the question of whether there are other paths to salvation outside the Christian churches, beyond the extraordinary paths, and consequently, whether there are also "ordinary" and "extraordinary" prophets. Küng sees seven similarities between Muhammad and the prophets of Israel: a personal relationship with God, divine calling, crisis and conflict, instrument/mouthpiece, monotheism, obedience to God, and justice/judgment. Muhammad's influence, which manifests itself in Islam as a "world-historical fact," a source of orientation, and "guidance for life," also argues in favor of recognizing him as a prophet. According to the New Testament, there can be "true prophets" even after Jesus. Therefore, Christians should not be troubled if Muhammad understands himself as such. His conduct in no way contradicts this. Should moral shortcomings be found in Muhammad, this would not disqualify him as a prophet. No one can know whether the Old Testament prophets were "all great saints."*[35]

One wonders if Küng lacks fundamental knowledge of Islam and the biography of Muhammad. This seems unlikely, however. It's more likely he's deliberately ignoring them because he's determined to reconcile Islam with Christianity. Has Küng never heard of Muhammad's thirteen wives and other female companions, or that he married his favorite wife when he was six years old, and that he and Muhammad, at eleven,

Has Küng consummated his marriage? Doesn't he know that Muhammad stole his adopted son's wife and married her, with Allah's approval? Is he unaware of the 206 verses in the Quran (two hundred and six) that are directed against non-Muslims, primarily Jews and Christians, including the aforementioned more than 20 verses about fighting and killing? Is Küng unaware of the approximately 60 wars (sixty) that Muhammad waged as a brutal warlord, of his orders to murder his opponents and their subsequent killings? And Jesus? How many wars did Jesus wage, how many orders to kill? Is this Muhammad supposed to be a prophet for Christians as well? Muslims, of course, say YES, but God's word in the Bible says NO. Every attempt at harmonization between Christian faith and Islam is doomed to failure. Do liberal theologians really want to establish Islam in the once Christian West with their theses? It's hard to believe. They certainly don't have the Bible, the word of God, on their side.

4. When a Muslim reminds and warns church officials about their Christian faith

After his resurrection, Jesus commissioned his followers to spread the Gospel, the Good News about him. Matthew writes: *"Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you."* ((Matthew 28:19-20) The other Evangelists also recorded Jesus' Great Commission: Mark (16:15), Luke (24:47; Acts 18), and John (17:18; 20:21). Mission is therefore a core task of the Church and of Christians in general. However, with regard to Islam, the Church seems to have adopted a different view.

The Evangelical Church in the Rhineland, at its synod in January 2018, overwhelmingly rejected Christian missions among Muslims in a "position statement." From the church's official perspective, this is logical. After all, if it is one and the same God, why missions among Muslims, who (allegedly) already know him? They simply worship him differently. Unfortunately, we must assume that this is a broad consensus within church leadership bodies. However, one must ask how many of the people who voted against missions among Muslims at the synod had personally engaged with the Quran, the Hadiths, the life of Muhammad, and Islamic history. Only those with comprehensive information can make an informed decision. It is to be feared, however, that most synod members acquired their knowledge solely from official church pronouncements, such as...

The information came from the book "What You Need to Know About Islam," or from the mainstream media, which are predominantly pro-Islam. It was therefore likely a one-sided account. Added to this was possibly the fear of voting against Islam, for fear of being accused of xenophobia. The fact is: The general level of knowledge about Islam in church bodies and congregations is still far too low. But it is a tragedy to deliberately fail to proclaim salvation in Jesus Christ to Muslims through a lack of missionary work.

Now, another important document has been published, entitled: "Muslims and Christians – Discussion Paper on a Theological Orientation of the Evangelical Church in Baden." It was published in 2018 by the Board of the Evangelical Supreme Church Council in Karlsruhe. Since then, it has been the subject of much controversial discussion in the Baden congregations. One doesn't need to know the details; it essentially presents the familiar positions on Islam as they are currently found in the Protestant churches.

Interestingly, criticism of this church document is coming from the Islamic side. Of course, not from the Islamic associations themselves, which are conservatively Islamic and welcome it as a further step towards the Islamization of Germany. Surprisingly, the liberal Islamic scholar Abdel-Hakim Ourghi from Freiburg has spoken out, describing the document as a *"Document of Submission*[36]He criticizes it vehemently, exposing the document for what it truly is: a heresy. This is nothing short of sensational. Who is this Abdel-Hakim Ourghi? Ourghi was born in 1968 in the city of Oran, Algeria, received his doctorate from the University of Freiburg in 2006, and has been head of the Department of Islamic Theology/Religious Education at the Freiburg University of Education since 2011. He advocates a secular and liberal Islam that separates secular and religious power, strives for a contemporary interpretation of the Quran and the Hadiths, and calls for a historical-critical interpretation of the Quran. In his book "Reform of Islam: 40 Theses," he argues that over the centuries the Quran has transformed from the word of God into the word of man. It is only indirectly the word of God, since it was written by fallible humans in different eras.[37]That he is fiercely attacked by his own fellow believers for such statements, even facing threats, is not surprising. For the "God" of Islam does not tolerate criticism; he demands submission to his will. Islam is not yet strong enough here to silence people like Ourghi, nor can he yet express his opinion. But Islam is on the rise, thanks to the support of the churches. Incidentally,

Khorchide, mentioned in the essay, was also threatened by his fellow believers.

According to Ourghi, the authors of the "Pathfinding of the Evangelical Church in Baden" seem to be mistaken in their *"well-intentioned ideas of living in a dream world that is entirely characterized by a high level of dialogue euphoria."* Although Mohammed is named as a political actor and statesman, *"However, the authors seem overwhelmed by the unpleasant historical events."* So says Ourghi. According to him, the authors of the document ignore the incarnation of God in Jesus and thus align themselves with the Islamic understanding of God. Ourghi accuses the church leaders of political correctness, which prevents them from speaking uncomfortable truths. *"It seems that only topics that do not offend Muslims are allowed for discussion. Unpleasant truths in the Quran or in the history of Islam must be suppressed.* Ourghi also laments that critics of Islam are often accused of being Islamophobic. This hinders dialogue, because, according to Ourghi, *" Enlighteners and critics are branded as dangerous."*[38] It is astonishing how accurately this Islamic scholar perceives the situation.

It is a Muslim, of all people, who, with his position paper on Islam, is essentially reading the riot act to the Baden Church, reminding it that it is on the verge of abandoning—or, one might even say, betraying—its own biblically grounded faith in favor of Islam. Such a warning is unlikely to sit well with historically critical and liberal theologians. An active pastor would certainly refrain from such words, as he could too easily lose his position. However, Ourghi cannot be accused of Islamophobia, since he himself is a Muslim, nor of xenophobia, since he was born in Algeria in 1968 and came here as a foreigner. In an interview from February 24, 2018, he spoke, among other things, about his faith, saying the following about Allah: *"God, who is merciful, who forgives, who always gives people the opportunity to make a new beginning when they sin."*[39]

However, the extent to which he lives in an illusion by referring to the mercy of Allah has already been demonstrated. One might ask, is there no one among the church leaders who can tell him where he can truly find mercy, namely in Jesus? Or are church leaders so blocked, so as not to have to abandon the idea of the same God, that they prefer to remain silent? When Ourghi publicly presented his opinion to the Dar-Assalam Mosque in Berlin, drawing on his book "Reform of Islam: 40 Theses," it was precisely representatives of the Protestant Church who condemned it as a PR stunt.

[40]Since many pastors and church officials advocate a historical-critical interpretation of the Bible, they should actually support Ourghi when he calls for a historical-critical examination of the Quran as well. Why scrutinize only the Bible and not the Quran too? But that is surely considered incorrect and is now taboo.

It is certainly astonishing that a Muslim, of all people, has to say that the churches' conciliatory approach to Islam is a path that contradicts the Christian faith. Protecting congregations from heresies is actually the very core responsibility of Christian theologians. But since many church leaders, theologians, and bishops—indeed, even synods—fail to do this with regard to Islam, the living God allows a liberal and secularized Muslim to speak out and warn Christians against their disastrous course. Will this warning signal be heeded? Or will the influence of the liberal, historically critical spirit of the age prevail?

5. Is there a way back?

The historical-critical method of biblical interpretation is a heresy. It has left behind a spiritual wasteland in the churches and in the faith of many theologians. The congregations are severely damaged in terms of their faith, or at least unsettled, and are also suffering from declining membership due to aging. According to studies, the (still) major Christian churches in Germany are expected to lose half their members by 2060.[41] The Protestant churches are projected to decline from approximately 20 million members today to 10 million. The Catholic Church is facing a similar decline. To still refer to them as "people's churches" would be an exaggeration. However, the decline of the churches may accelerate even further. The Protestant churches, in particular, are perceived by the public as politically left-leaning. This perception is linked to issues such as the refugee crisis, gender ideology, climate change, globalization, multiculturalism, and others. Theology professor Udo Schnelle (Halle/Saale) laments:*"Thus, the church is increasingly becoming just another social club that serves individual group interests, whose contours are blurred and whose message no longer really differs from party slogans."* [42]This also includes the "refugee ship" that the Evangelical Church in Germany (EKD) has put into operation in the Mediterranean using church tax funds. Not all church members agree with this, as it is quite likely that human trafficking organizations are involved. Furthermore, only a few of the "refugees" are truly persecuted and threatened; some are, but most simply want to access our social welfare system.

These churches, gradually disintegrating from within and with a largely diminished Christian faith, are now encountering an increasingly powerful and self-assured Islam that seeks to seize power. This is also being stated publicly. As early as 2000, the Afghan-German journalist, film and television producer Walid Nakschbandi wrote: *"A life without us*(Note: Muslims)*It will no longer exist for you. ... You will not be able to prevent a judge of Turkish origin from soon passing judgment on you, a Pakistani doctor from curing your illnesses, a Tamil from helping to pass your laws in parliament. ... You are merely bystanders in this painful process, bothersome gawkers. We will change German society in both East and West.*[43]

A similar opinion was expressed back in 2016 by Hasnain Kazim, who was born in Germany to Indian-Pakistani parents and is now a German journalist and author. In a rebuttal to Alexander Gauland, deputy leader of the AfD, he said: *"Get used to it. We*(Note: Muslims) *They are here, their numbers are growing, and they are claiming Germany for ourselves, whether you like it or not."*[44]

Jordanian MP Mohammad Nouh has his sights set on the Islamization of the entire world. On July 12, 2020, he declared on the Kuwaiti television channel Iqra that Allah had endowed Arabs with special leadership qualities not possessed by other peoples. According to him, their genetic makeup made them world rulers. Arabs were not created to work, but to be leaders of non-Arabs. He insisted, however, that this had nothing to do with racism.[45]And what is it then, please? Even if not every Muslim speaks like Nouh, we must acknowledge that this man, with his outrageous statements, is entirely within the bounds of the Quran: whether it be the aforementioned verses about world conquest or the 25 verses where Allah permits his followers to keep slaves (Surah 4:24; 16:71; 23:1, 5, 6, etc.); after all, his followers are *"the best community that arose for the people."*(Sure 3,110)

Liberal church leaders prefer to ignore such voices, as do left-wing politicians. Likewise, apart from a few quiet protests, there is a general silence surrounding the fact that the Hagia Sophia Cathedral in Istanbul, once the largest Christian church, was converted into a mosque in 1453 after the Turkish conquest of Constantinople, served as a museum for the last 80 years, and reverted to a mosque on July 24, 2020. This would, after all, require a critical examination of Islam and its claim to dominance. And that is impossible, since everyone has committed to the same God. Except, perhaps, when yet another Islamic terrorist murders people while shouting "Allahu Akbar."

While critics often emphasize that Islam means "peace" and that any use of violence in the name of Allah is an abuse of the religion by Islamists, they conveniently ignore the fact that these Islamists can indeed invoke Allah.

By all human standards, the future looks bleak for the churches and for our German fatherland. Is there, then, no way back from this dilemma? Yes! But it is arduous and must actually begin with theologians and churches, or in other words, with a resurgence of the Christian faith. The path, however, leads only through a renewed and honest turning to the triune God of the Bible, that is, to the "hill of Golgotha" as Theodor Heuss called it. In the seemingly similarly hopeless situation of the Babylonian captivity, the living God, through Jeremiah, sent a message to his people Israel: *""If you seek me with all your heart, I will let you find me."* (Jeremiah 29:13b-14a). Israel turned to God, and He allowed Himself to be found. The theologian Linnemann found the living God and subsequently broke with the "Babylonian captivity" of the historical-critical method. Why don't more liberal theologians follow her example? Turning to God holds a promise. Jeremiah's faith was later confirmed by Jesus. *"Seek and you will find... whoever seeks, finds."* (Matthew 7:7-8). Approaching Islam is not an option!

Even in the Old Testament, God said to the people of Israel: *"See, I am setting before you today a blessing and a curse: the blessing, if you obey the commandments of the Lord your God that I am commanding you today; but the curse, if you do not obey the commandments of the Lord your God and turn aside from the way that I am commanding you today, by following other gods that you have not known."* (Deuteronomy 11:26-28

Liberal theologians, bishops, pastors, and other church officials today, in large numbers, follow not only the God of the Bible but also the other "god" of Islam. The eternal God will not tolerate this! When the Apostle Paul was on his way to Jerusalem, where he was later arrested, he first bid a final farewell to the church in Ephesus. He laid this on the hearts of the elders, the church leaders: *"Therefore, keep watch over yourselves and over all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God, which he bought with his own blood. For I know that after my departure ravenous wolves will come among you, not sparing the flock. Even from among you will arise men who teach false doctrines in order to draw away disciples to themselves. Therefore, be on your guard.* (Acts 20:28-31a)

To counter the danger posed by ravenous wolves, Christians early on summarized their faith in short statements of confession. The earliest one handed down to us comes from Peter: *"You are Christ, the Son of the living God."* (Matthew 16:16), another from Paul: *"...that this Jesus whom I – he said – proclaim to you is the Christ."* ((Acts 17:3) Later, the confessions became more detailed, often in a Trinitarian form, meaning the first section made fundamental statements about God as Father, the next about Jesus as Son, and the third about the Holy Spirit. Since bishops, pastors, and church leaders are responsible for preventing false teachings from creeping in and destroying the faith, the confessions served as a great help as a standard of Christian faith when foreign and unbiblical teachings arose.

Nevertheless, it is a sad fact that throughout 2000 years of church history, teachings contrary to the Bible have repeatedly spread within congregations. Moreover, many heresies originated within Christian communities and churches. Islam is one such heresy; it arose, initially quite unnoticed, from a heretical, that is, faith-distorting, branch of Arabic Christianity. Only in our time are we beginning to explore the still obscure origins of Islam. Besides other heresies, so to speak traditionally known here and found in various sects, congregations are currently under attack from two particularly potent heresies: firstly, gender ideology (marriage for all; dissolution of the traditional family structure of father, mother, and child), and secondly, the age-old misconception of a single God in the Bible and the Quran. The Protestant Church is particularly susceptible to all sorts of prevailing trends. The Catholic Church is somewhat less susceptible, as it at least rejects gender ideology, but it was the first to champion the common God and enshrine this in the Second Vatican Council.

In my Evangelical Church of Westphalia, the following confessional writings, among others, are recognized: the Apostles' Creed and the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed, both from the early Church; from more recent times, the Augsburg Confession (Confessio Augustana) of 1530 and the Barmen Declaration of 1934. All bishops and pastors are ordained upon these confessions and, of course, upon the Bible, both Old and New Testaments. Before their ordination, they submit a written statement of affirmation; otherwise, ordination and a pastorate in the church would not be possible. With this declaration, they commit themselves to teaching matters of faith in accordance with the Bible and the aforementioned confessions and to representing these creeds externally. This is the "basis" of their pastoral ministry. Other churches have different confessions, which will not be discussed in detail here.

It should be listed; however, many have adopted those of the Old Church as binding.

We have therefore seen that, according to the Bible, a correspondence between the triune God and Allah is absolutely impossible. This is also reflected early on in the church creeds. The Apostles' Creed (which is an integral part of every Protestant service, shared by the churches of the West, and which originated at the end of the 2nd century and was finally formulated in the 5th century) contains the following statements: *"I believe in God, the Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth. And in Jesus Christ, his only begotten Son..."* The Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed, which is still recited in Protestant services on major church holidays and unites all of Christendom, contains the following passage about Jesus Christ: *"God's only begotten Son, begotten of the Father before all worlds: God of God, Light of Light, true God of true God, begotten, not made.* Islam denies precisely these statements of both faiths: Jesus is not a begotten son, Allah has no son, he was only created like Adam, therefore only a human being.

These fundamental Christian confessions had long been established when Islam emerged in the 7th century. This means that the Islamic heresy that Jesus was not the Son of God had already been clarified and rejected on the basis of the Bible some 250 years before the advent of Islam. What foresight from our God! But why didn't the Christians of the East measure the then newly emerging Islam against their own confessions at an early stage? By the time it had gained power, it was too late. Even in the Augsburg Confession (Confessio Augustana), the important Lutheran confessional document from 1530, Islam is rejected as heresy (Article 1.1), which, however, is not printed in today's Protestant hymnal (p. 1364). Was there a reason for this? Finally, in the Barmen Declaration of 1934, point 6 states: *"The mission of the Church, in which its freedom is founded, consists in proclaiming the message of God's free grace to all people in Christ's place, and thus in the service of his own word and work, through preaching and sacrament. We reject the false teaching that the Church, in human arrogance, could place the word and work of the Lord at the service of any self-imposed desires, purposes, and plans.* Therefore, sermons in Protestant church services on Sundays must not revolve around the supposedly shared God in the Bible and the Quran, nor around Abraham as the supposedly shared father of the faith. These are theologians' arbitrary "wishes, purposes, and plans" to legitimize Islam. But left-wing and green themes cannot be the main focus either.

It's not about preaching. It's about the core of our faith, as our ancestors thankfully formulated it concisely in the creeds. From this point, I ask my ordained colleagues:[46]When will there be a return to what everyone vowed before God at ordination? The path back to God is described in the Bible as repentance, turning around, and that means: REFLECT - RETHINK - RETHINK, including speaking and acting anew. The Bible calls this being born again (John 3:1-7).

May Almighty God send a new hunger for his word into our country and into the churches.

Finally: The risen Jesus gave us Christians the Great Commission, and this naturally applies to Muslims as well. Brother Hafez, a pastor in an evangelical church in an Islamic state in Africa, writes:*"When Muslims are preached the Gospel, they open their hearts to the message, and conversions occur time and again. The church grows through the authoritative preaching of the Word. Anyone who tells Muslims that Christianity and Islam are essentially equal actually prevents conversion to Jesus.*[47]The removal of bishops' crosses in the presence of Muslims, on the Temple Mount or in a mosque, would also constitute such an obstacle. As Christians bound to the Bible, we wish to pray for liberal theologians and church leaders.

Notes and references

General

Where internet links are provided, they were accessible at the time of manuscript preparation and printing. Quotations have been reproduced as they were formulated in the source. Quotations from the Bible and the Quran, and the corresponding references, refer to the Bible (according to the translation by Martin Luther, revised edition of 1984, published by the Evangelical Church in Germany) and the Quran (translated from the Arabic by Max Henning, introduction and notes by Annemarie Schimmel, Reclam Universal Library No. 4206, Stuttgart, 1991).

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4. ideaSpectrum No. 13, March 28, 2018, p.6
5. This essay avoids politically correct gender-inclusive language for the sake of better understanding.

For the sake of readability, the masculine form has been omitted. The so-called generic masculine or the plural communis (common plural) is used.

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18. Vedas: This refers to the scriptures of the Vedic religion. It is the oldest religion in India that can be traced back to written records. The Vedic religion is polytheistic (a religion of many gods) and animistic (belief in spirits, the assumption that objects are animated by spirits).
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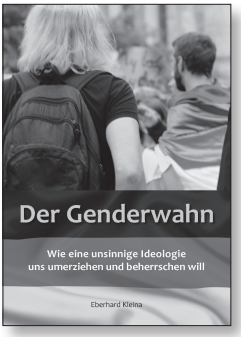

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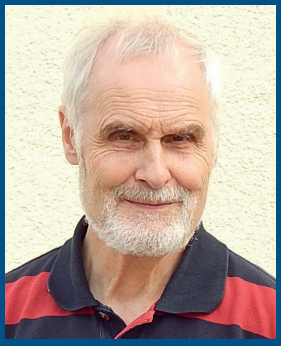

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